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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 000210

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TAGS: [IZ](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#)
SUBJECT: JANUARY 14 MCNS: HAIFA STREET, BSP, MAYSAN PIC
DELAY

REF: BAGHDAD 75

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S/REL UK) SUMMARY: During the January 14 meeting of the Ministerial Committee on National Security (MCNS), participants discussed the ongoing operation in the area around Baghdad's Haifa Street, noting the need to have situational awareness of the humanitarian situation in the area. PM Maliki blamed the violence on "foreign guests" -- Syrians, Palestinians, and Sudanese -- who he wanted removed from the area. Participants also discussed preparations for the revised Baghdad Security Plan (BSP), including the appointment of LTG Aboud as the Baghdad Operational Commander and elements of new restrictions to be applied under the State of Emergency. When National Security Advisor Rubaie stressed the importance of non-military aspects of the Plan, Deputy Prime Minister al-Zubaie spoke about the importance of moving toward political reconciliation by taking steps on de-Baathification and detainees while others focused on media relations and public opinion. Rubaie said the Deputy Ministerial Committee on National Security would soon submit recommendations relating to the possible closure of Iraq's borders during portions of the BSP. The Prime Minister agreed to delay the transfer of security responsibility for Maysan. Rubaie reported that the ministerial committee tasked with examining Ministry of Interior reform had met during the previous week, focusing on structural changes for the ministry. Minister of Defense Abdul Qader reported that implementation of MOD reform was continuing, with certain positions in the ministry being found to be inconsistent with the Constitution. END SUMMARY

The Battle for Haifa Street

12. (S/REL UK) At the January 14 meeting of the Ministerial Committee on National Security (MCNS), Deputy Prime Minister al-Zubaie expressed concern for the innocent civilians living in the area of Baghdad's Haifa Street. He said that a sustained Iraqi Security Force (ISF) and Coalition operation in the area had resulted in civilian casualties. He also said that the Red Cross and other NGOs had complained of inadequate access to the Haifa Street area. The Ambassador said that it was important to have situational awareness about the humanitarian situation in the area, asking if stores were open and people were able to obtain food. Minister of Defense Abdul Qader said that stores were open, denying that the area was cordoned off or that access had been refused to humanitarian groups. He also said that ISF snipers were supported by spotters in order to make sure that they did not shoot innocent civilians. At the same time,

Abdul Qader made clear that there was a need to clear the area of terrorists.

¶3. (S/REL UK) PM Maliki agreed with Abdul Qader, ordering that each house in the area needed to be searched. He blamed "foreign guests" -- Syrians, Palestinians, and Sudanese -- for much of the violence in the area, arguing that they need to be removed so that their homes can go back to the professors and teachers who used to live in the area. National Security Advisor Rubaie said the Deputy Ministerial Committee on National Security should be tasked with examining the issue of what to do with foreigners who had come to Iraq and been given a place to live. Maliki argued that the Syrians and Palestinians had forced out the teachers and professors by force.

Baghdad Security Plan Updates

¶4. (S/REL UK) Abdul Qader said that Phase 1 (preparation) of the revised Baghdad Security Plan was progressing. He reported on the selection of the Baghdad Operational Commander, LTG Aboud, noting that he would be headquartered at Adnan Palace. Deputy National Security Advisor Safa'a Rasul said that the two subordinate commands, at Rusafa and Karkh, would be able to hold approximately 1,000 and 160-170 detainees, respectively. Abdul Qader also said that he planned to travel to Sulaymaniyah for discussions regarding the movement of Iraqi Army troops to Baghdad. He said that Phase 2 of the Plan (clearing and redeployment) was scheduled to start on February 1, as opposed to January 15 as originally discussed. Abdul Qader said that he anticipated

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that Phase 2 would take 60-90 days to complete, at which time Phase 3 (hold and secure) operations would commence. The final phase -- Phase 4 -- would see a hand over of responsibility from the Coalition to the GOI. The Deputy Director of the Iraqi National Intelligence Service said that it would be important to continually monitor the plan, assessing it in order to apply "lessons learned" and fixing small problems before they become big ones. The Prime Minister thought this was a good idea, allowing commanders the opportunity to reinforce positive trends and make decisions on how to reverse negative ones. Foreign Minister Zebari said that after early stages of the plan, ministers should make public appearances in "cleared" areas.

¶5. (S/REL UK) Abdul Qader noted that the Prime Minister intended to release a statement describing new steps to be taken under the State of Emergency, including treating any vehicles without a license plate as a potential terrorist targets. (Note: The State of Emergency has technically lapsed because the Council of Representatives has been unable to muster the quorum it needs to extend it. The State of Emergency has to be extended every 30 days. End note.) Rubaie added that the statement would also include items relating to the closure of borders, the status of houses of worship, and weapons licenses. Noting that police and other government cars are sometimes used to conduct illegal activities, the Prime Minister said he would make clear that any government car parked at a house overnight would be considered stolen. UK Ambassador Asquith asked if these new steps would require Council of Representatives approval. Maliki said it did not have to go through the parliament, arguing that it could be done through the "terrorist act." (Note: GOI officials have argued that several different authorities -- including the PM's commander-in-chief authorities under Article 78 of the constitution -- provide the GOI the ability to implement these measures. We have pushed back on these arguments based on concerns that they would cede too much power to the Executive. We have argued that the best route would be for the parliament to extend the State of Emergency. End Note)

Non-Military Aspects of the Plan

¶6. (S/REL UK) Rubaie said that non-military parts of the Plan were crucial to its success. The Deputy Minister of State for National Security agreed, stressing the importance of building public opinion around the plan. He said that there were rumors circulating that the city's young men will be interned. Maliki said that the newly created media committee should confront such rumors. Rubaie said that it was important that the government "all speak off of the same sheet of music" regarding the plan. He said that while dissenting opinions could be expressed in private discussions, such as MCNS meetings, publicly all government officials were expected to support the plan.

¶7. (S/REL UK) Zubaie said that the most important "new" element to the U.S. strategy announced by President Bush on January 10 was the push to have the GOI deal with the political failure in Iraq. He said that MCNS members should admit that the GOI had failed to find political agreement on a number of key issues. Noting that reconciliation efforts had been further damaged by the controversy surrounding the execution of Saddam Hussein, Zubaie urged movement on the issues of de-Baathification reform and detainees.

Border Closings

¶8. (S/REL UK) PM Maliki asked about plans for closing Iraq's borders, including whether there were sufficient forces to do the job. He said that he had heard that a large number of Algerians had crossed the border, adding that "I know them (the Algerians). They don't fear death and fight like barbarians." When MNF-I Commanding General Casey reminded Maliki that the Deputy Ministerial Committee on National Security (DMCNS) was examining the issue of the borders, Rubaie said that the DMCNS would submit recommendations to him within the next week or two.

Transfer of Security Responsibility for Maysan

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¶9. (S/REL UK) Following up on the previous week's discussion (reftel) of the transfer of Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC) for Maysan province, Rubaie said that an order had been prepared for the PM's signature canceling the province's Emergency Security Committee. MNF-I Commanding General Casey said that he had been to Maysan during the last week and had been impressed by the interaction between the governor and his top security officials. Nevertheless, Casey said that the MND-SE Division Commander still had concerns about the police in Amarah. Casey suggested that the Ministry of Interior be tasked with sending a team to Amarah to assess the police, delaying transfer of security responsibility at least until the assessment team had reported back. Commenting that there was "not a rush," Maliki agreed. He said that with the newest phase of the Baghdad Security Plan (BSP) about to start, violent groups might leave Baghdad and move to the south or west. He said that since there had been problems in Amarah in the past, it made sense to wait to transfer until after the GOI had had a chance to assess the impact of the BSP and the capability of the local police. Rubaie pointed out that this would mean the transfer of Maysan would not be accelerated as planned, urging a speedy transfer if the MOI police assessment was positive.

MOI Reform

¶10. (S/REL UK) Rubaie said that the ministerial committee tasked with making recommendations on reform of the Ministry of Interior (MOI) had held its third meeting during the previous week. The committee had made progress on restructuring the ministry. When Rubaie said that the issue of "balancing" the ethno-sectarian and party affiliation within the ministry would be discussed in the coming week, the Prime Minister said that the MOI had already provided him a list to be used for "balancing" and that he would pass the list to Rubaie. Rubaie also said that the MOI should provide a full report on the status of the Facility Protection Service.

MOD Reform

¶11. (S/REL UK) Abdul Qader provided an update on MOD reform, noting that a review of certain positions had found them to be inconsistent with the Constitution. He also said that a committee had been formed to follow through with required security checks. (Note: Arabic language handout on this issue has been e-mailed to NEA/I. End note.)
KHALILZAD